

House Republican Press Release

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Rep. Hetherington Calls for Special Session to Protect Property Rights



Says Legislature Should Not Delay on Important Issue of Eminent Domain

State Rep. John W. Hetherington, R-125th, New Canaan, Wilton, today called for a special legislative session this summer to limit the state's eminent domain laws that have been used to seize private property and turn it over to developers who then profit from economic development projects. He is co-sponsoring a proposed bill to protect property owners.

"The right to be secure in our property is fundamental to our liberty," said Rep. Hetherington, "and we should act swiftly to ensure this right."

"Private property rights are at the heart of the American political system," said Rep. Hetherington. "Government should be able to take people's homes, only in very limited cases. The Connecticut legislature needs to take action now to limit this power of government to take property for private developers."

House Republican Leader Robert M. Ward of North Branford has spearheaded the drive to protect property owners' rights in the wake of a controversial U.S. Supreme Court decision involving the city of New London and residents of the Fort Trumbull area who challenged the use of eminent domain.

By a 5-4 margin, the high court ruled the state's eminent domain laws were constitutional but invited Connecticut to limit them if it wanted.

"This is not a complicated matter as opponents have suggested," said Rep. Hetherington. "You either stand with the individual homeowners who don't want to sell their homes and be forced to move, or you stand on the side of big government and powerful developers."

Rep. Ward's proposal deletes from existing state law six lines that currently permit development agencies to seize property for economic development. Local and state governments could still exercise eminent domain to deal with truly blighted properties that pose health or safety hazards or for public works projects including schools, roads and other infrastructure improvements.

Rep. Hetherington serves the 125th Assembly District of New Canaan and Wilton in the state House of Representatives.